

how about the cafeteria

the center of a storm



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The GSA-GSI contract was not awarded on a competitive-bid basis; it was negotiated. The latest version of this agreement became effective in 1971. In force for an indefinite term, it is liable to cancellation by either party on 196 days' notice. The arrangement requires GSI to pay 1 1/2% of its gross sales into a reserve account, out of which capital equipment is purchased that becomes the property of the U.S. Government. In a trade-off for these payments, GSA does not charge the company for rent or utilities.

The subject of rent has become much hotter lately than some of the food that GSI dispenses. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has made an issue of it (i.e. of the rent). It has proposed that certain concessionaires (read GSI) in federal buildings be billed for the space they occupy. The proposal had been knocking around OMB for some years, and was revived only recently. But before deciding whether to put it into effect (a decision is not likely

An honest critique of the food in

BY FATSO

Fatso is the nom de plume of a Department gourmet whose appetite is poor, but who is completely objective. "I tell it like it tastes," he says. His usual lunch in State's cafeteria consists of yogurt and two hard rolls. However, he agreed to abandon his low-cholesterol diet—"just for today"—when the NEWSLETTER promised it would publish this review, uncensored.

ON THE BASIS of a full-course luncheon on February 22, which cost me \$2.79, I have decreed a rating of 2 1/2 Homburgs



for our employees' cafeteria. Fatso's **Homburg Rating System** is translatable in these terms: **4 Homburgs**: "Not bad at all." **3 Homburgs**: "Not all that bad." **2 Homburgs**: "Could be better." **1 Homburg**: "Eat elsewhere."

My two companions and I entered the cafeteria at about 12:35 p.m. on the critical day, and two of us were at the cash register by 12:41 p.m. The third, who had elected to join the "deli" sandwich line, beat us by 2 minutes. Not bad. All three of us were given adequate attention in the food line, where we were received pleasantly by the cafeteria employees. I make no further comment on the service, inasmuch as there are limits to

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Another possible option, of course, would be for GSI to go ahead and pay the rent, passing it on to patrons through higher prices at the register. But the company's view is that this would not be feasible be-

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private company. GSA-GSI contract was not on a competitive-bid basis; it was negotiated. The latest version of the agreement became effective in 1966 for an indefinite term, subject to cancellation by either party on 90 days' notice. The agreement requires GSI to pay 1 1/2% of gross sales into a reserve account out of which capital equipment purchased that becomes the property of the U.S. Government. In addition, for these payments, GSA will charge the company for rent.

The subject of rent has become more controversial lately than some of the other issues GSI dispenses. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has made an issue of it (i.e. of the fact that it has proposed that certain contractors (read GSI) in federal buildings be billed for the space they occupy. The proposal had been circulating around OMB for some time and was revived only recently. Before deciding whether to put it to a vote (a decision is not likely

An honest critique of the food in our incomparable cafeteria

BY FATSO

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what one should expect in a cafeteria. A word or two on the ambience: The floors were spotless; my tray was clean and hot, but not yet dry. We did find a tidy table, comfortably removed from the smokers' section.

I had spurned the daily special, which featured sukiyaki that day. I selected the veal steak for my main course. The choice, as it turned out, was not an historic one. While, admittedly, an authentic veal steak is not available these days for \$1.00, I felt that the chopped, pounded meat could have been prepared more tastefully. The breaded coating, even sans sauce or gravy, was—as you say it in the United States—greasy. Yet the portion was generous, and the meat was tender. The entree was hot when I reached my table with it—another plus. (I did not care for my colleague's sukiyaki, being, as I am, a gourmet who absolutely abhors onions; however, a taste of my other friend's fish sandwich caused me to regret I had not ordered that crusty and moist morsel, which my friend was then evaluating as being "rather strong of taste.")

My fried rice (30¢) was gluey, which made it compatible with the pseudo veal steak. However, I am gratified to report that the fruit pieces in my second side dish—escaloped apples (25¢)—were hot, firm and cooked in a syrup not overly sweet.

As is my custom, I saved my

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Another possible option, of course, would be for GSI to go ahead and pay the rent, passing it on to patrons through higher prices at the register. But the company's view is that this would not be feasible be-

cause patronage, already slipping, then would drop precipitately. At least one OMB official, however, is not impressed. He told the NEWSLETTER: "Government workers pay less than other people for their lunches because many of the cafeterias they eat in don't pay rent. This is a fringe benefit both for the company and the Government employees. A good argument can be made that all these fringes should be open and above-board, so the whole world can see what the total compensation is for

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Rarer's strategy. Starting at some time in the spring, he told the NEWSLETTER, he hopes to convert the offerings at one end of the cafeteria—probably the south end—into a soup-and-salad unit. Two or three varieties of soup will be sold, and patrons will fix their own salads from makings that will be provided at a salad bar. "I think we're going to do all right," Mr. Rarer says. "You have some great people here, and I'm glad I was given this assignment."

Concessions at State: a quick reference

Here is a rundown on some of the other concessions in the State Department building:

NEWSSTAND (second floor)—Space is provided to the blind, without charge, under the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Neither State nor the General Services Administration (GSA), which manages the State building, controls prices. The concessionaire is chosen by the District of Columbia licensing agency, which works with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

STORE (adjoining cafeteria)—The Office of Minority Business Enterprise, in the Department of Commerce, awards this concession—a noncompetitive contract award—under Section 8a of the Small Business Act. The concessionaire pays the Government a sum equal to 1 1/2 % of gross sales.

CREDIT UNION—Does not pay rent; space provided under the Federal Credit Union Act.

BANK—This concessionaire is selected by the Treasury Department. Pays rent through GSA.

COMBINED AIRLINES TICKET OFFICE—The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposal on rent would affect this operation.

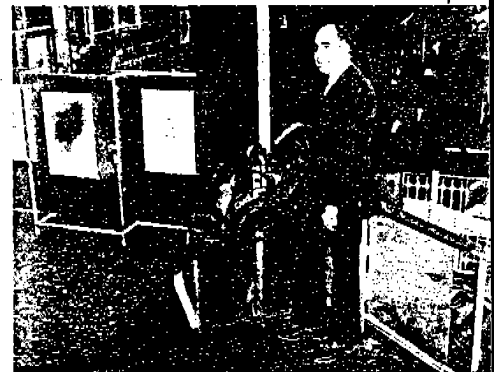
STATE-USIA-AID RECREATION ASSOCIATION—State makes its own arrangements with this organization, which controls parking and operates a number of other services for employees. The OMB rent proposal might also affect this association. ■

MEET THE 'MAYOR'; IMIRIE'S THE NAME

The "mayor" of the State Department—the man who handles complaints, if any, about the cafeteria, the cleaning crew, the parking spaces, the heat, the cold, the rest rooms, the physical shifting of offices and other aspects of the working environment here—is Scott F. Imirie Jr. As a ruse for keeping his workload manageable, he hides behind the formal title of chief, General Services Division, Office of Operations, Bureau of Administration.

When the NEWSLETTER changed its address recently, from Room 6808 to Room 3237, it was Mr. Imirie who sat at the checkerboard, figuring out where the news staff would go. "You can find me doing this practically all the time," he said. "Someone's always being moved and, though I'm not the one who gives the order, I'll be the one who hears about it. I'd say the people here are more sensitive about where their offices are than practically anything else. Everyone wants to be in the 'high rent district' on the seventh floor." "How do you stay out of trouble with your constituents?" he was asked. He replied: "I don't."

While the "mayor" was not, of course, elected to his post, and though there is no need for him to campaign in the building, one senses that he most likely would do well on the stump. Besides being gregarious, sympathetic and good-humored, he happens to have an identity with the main building at 21st and C Streets (he also is in charge of Department office space elsewhere in Washington and the United States) that few other "candidates" could match. He began "thinking State" even before he came to work here. The reason: His mother, Olive L. Imirie, already was here, she was a



"His Honor"

clerical employee in the old munitions control office, retiring in the 1960s. Her son the "mayor" joined the Department in 1950 as a clerk-typist. As his career advanced, he became a space analyst and helped plan the expansion of the building where he now, as it were, officiates.

"The other complaints I get are mostly about the temperature," he said. "I have a warm room myself (his office looks out to 21st Street and Virginia Avenue). I realize that some other people don't. But that depends on just where you happen to be in relationship to the separate heating zones inside the building. There are about 25 of them, varying in the amount of space they cover. The system is a pretty good one of its kind, even though it's a little uneven. In a place where there might be a particular problem, we try to do something about it. You understand, of course, that the real manager of the building is the General Services Administration. My role is to act as the Department's liaison with GSA on this and other matters."

When Mr. Imirie goes home, it's to a 70-year-old frame residence in Chevy Chase which he describes architecturally as "early farm." "I enjoy puttering around; I'm a do-it-yourself guy," he said. "How does your home compare with the State building?" he was asked. He replied: "I'd say they were on a par. Neither of them are new, but I like to work at keeping them in shape. I like to see things run efficiently."

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